hundred one step from the next. How small our task force looked! Hardly more than two thousand men, a drop in a raging sea. Krasnov asked me to accompany him when he took a place before his troops. He read the agreement and added, "Now my job is to take you home. We have done all we could. Not ours is the shame for what is going to happen in Russia."

We returned to the palace.

TAKEN PRISONER

The rooms formerly occupied by the headquarters of the task force were now in the hands of the Communists, some tense and bewildered, others intoxicated by victory or plain drunk. No officers were in sight. I was sitting in a comparatively quiet corner in a remote room, dead tired, almost asleep, when three men approached me—a student of the Mining Institute of Petrograd and two workers.

"I am the chairman of the Gatchina Soviet," the student said to me. "Some sailors are threatening to get you. If you do not object, we would rather take you into custody and whisk you out of here to a safe place as our prisoner." And he added in a whisper, "These comrades and I are S-R. You can trust us."

I looked at them. There could be no doubt of their sincerity. The two workers rushed to the adjacent room and returned with a score of soldiers with guns and fixed bayonets. People around us had noticed that something unusual was going on. The room was full of Petrograd soldiers. The chairman of the Gatchina Soviet posted his men around me and said sternly, "Citizen Commissar! The Gatchina Soviet has ordered us to take you into custody. Guards, march!"

The Gatchina soldiers escorted me to the entrance of the palace. They were hand-picked, tall, husky fellows, and I was well hidden among them. But as we were descending the steps in front of the palace, Petrograd sailors recognized me. Someone yelled, "Look, there goes the bloodsucker!" Excited men pressed around. The student shouted, "Attention! This man is the prisoner of the Gatchina Soviet. All power to the Soviet!"

My escort made its way slowly through the crowd. I noticed several Cossacks, without arms, among the Petrograd soldiers. They pressed forward as from curiosity. Then they formed a ring around our small group, and a young Cossack whispered to me, "Don't worry, Comrade Commissar! You are one of ours, nothing will happen to you."

He smiled at me, I smiled at him. We emerged from the crowd into the quietness of a dark street. The Gatchina soldiers broke